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ABSTRACT

This study, which focused on effects of child care on the workplace, addressed several questions: (1) What kinds of child care arrangements do employed parents make, and why do they make them? (2) Are these parents having difficulty finding child care? (3) Does their ability to manage child care affect their absenteeism and stress? (4) What roles do occupation and personnel policies play in this issue? The study was based on a May 1983 survey of a workforce of 20,000 from 33 companies and agencies chosen to represent a broad cross section of industries, occupations, and income levels in the Portland, Oregon, area. Participants included large and small manufacturing concerns, hospitals, service industries, and retail concerns, as well as several public agencies. Of the 8,121 employees who responded to the survey, 54 percent were women, 44 percent had children under the age of 18, and 30 percent had children under the age of 12. Findings, which mainly concerned families with children under 12, indicated that child care is hard to find and difficult to manage. Family structure and ability to arrange child care have an impact on the workplace in the form of absenteeism and stress. Company policies and work requirements also affect families, and employee stress level and ability to be at work. General recommendations are offered to employers. (RH)

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HARD TO FIND AND DIFFICULT TO MANAGE:

THE EFFECTS OF CHILD CARE ON THE WORKPLACE

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A Report to Employers
For distribution at a forum on Child Care and Employee Productivity: The Workforce Partnership, to be held March 1, 1984 at the Westin-Benson, Portland, Oregon

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Burger King
Nike
Providence Hospital
Standard Insurance
Stoel Rives Boley Fraser & Wyse
Tektronix
Tri-Met
Port of Portland
Adult and Family Services Div.
Childrens Services Div.
Veterans Reg. Office & Hospital
Multnomah Co. (health & environ)
City of Portland:
Police Dept.
Fire Dept.
Water Dept.
Small Depts. combined
Portland Public Schools
Portland State University
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PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

On all sides of the issue, employers hear strong opinions about the child care needs of employees. Some people advise employers to establish benefits, facilities, subsidies, and services,while others raise concerns about costs, equity, and who should bear responsibility for child care. The issue is rife with favorite solutions and unexamined assumptions, and these are countered by nagging doubts about the nature and extent of the need.

The controversy is reflected in the opinions of employees themselves. The following comments made by employees of local companies illustrate how diverse these opinions may be.

- "I am happy with child care arrangements; however, half my wife's pay goes to child care. . . Companies should help subsidize child care!"
- "I resent business getting into the child care business. I think child care funded by a company discriminates against those employees that have no use for child care."
- "I feel child care at one's place of work is the only reasonable and logical method that should be used. Peace of mind for the mother would benefit employers and society."
- "I firmly feel that child care is a personal responsibility-not that of an employer. No one else should be responsible for our choices to bear children or the results!"

In the face of such conflicting advice, employers need objective information about the relationship of child care needs to the work of their employees. The purpose of this study was to provide employers with such information so that they might more easily decide how much responsibility to assume or which policies to pursue. The study addressed several questions: What kinds of child care arrangements do employed parents make,and why do they make them? Are they having difficulty finding child care? Does their ability to manage child care affect their absenteeism and stress? What roles do occupation and personnel policies play in this issue?

METHODOLOGY

The study was based on a May 1983 survey of a workforce of 20,000 from 33 companies and agencies chosen to represent a broad cross section of industries, occupations, and income levels in the Portland area. It included large and small manufacturing concerns, hospitals, service industries, and retail concerns, as well as several public agencies.

The survey used a four-page questionnaire which focused on various aspects of employees' child care arrangements as well as certain events, such as absenteeism and stress, which might reflect difficulty in combining work and family responsibilities. The questionnaire asked about current arrangements or events of the past four weeks, thereby obtaining a time sample of employees' lives. Moreover, it asked about actual circumstances rather than ideals or preferences, so that the survey would provide a realistic picture of effective demand and the difficulties associated with managing child care. "Absenteeism" was defined as any loss of time from work for any reason. Questions were asked about four kinds of absenteeism: days missed, times late, times left early, and times interrupted while at work. The questions concerning absenteeism were asked of all employees without reference to reasons such as child care problems or work stress, so that the absenteeism rates of parents and non-parents could be validly compared.

The questionnaire was distributed to all employees at the selected work sites. It was given to all employees at a worksite, rather than a sample of them, so that sufficient data would be obtained for analyzing organizational units, occupations, and geographical areas. Employees completed the questionnaires anonymously and returned them in sealed envelopes to the Regional Research Institute either through company collection points or through the mail. In several companies, the return rate exceeded 60 percent, but distribution problems at some sites, employee nonresponse, and our own removal of some incomplete questionnaires combined to reduce the overall rate to 40 percent. In general, the responses of employees to the survey were careful and complete, and were often supplemented by a rich outpouring of written comment.

Of the 8121 employees who responded to the survey, 54 percent were women, 44 percent had children under the age of 18, and 30 percent had children under the age of 12, an age that most employed parents believe requires some form of child care. Eight percent of the employees were non-white, 46 percent had family incomes of $30,000 or more,52 percentconsidered themselves management or professionals, 89 percent worked full time, and 78 percent worked a day shift. Of those employees who were parents, 37 percent of the women and 14 percent of the men were single, while 57 percent of the women and 52 percent of the men had employed spouses. Full sample characteristics are shown in Appendix A. This report focuses primarily on families with children under the age of 12.

FINDINGS

Family Resources for Child Care

What kinds of child care did employed parents arrange? Families frequently used combinations of arrangements. For example, one employee with an employed spouse and two children had a 3-year-old in preschool twice a week and a 6-month-old in "family day care" with a neighbor for two days, both with relatives for two days, and both children at home on the fifth day with their mother. The average number of arrangements per family with children under 12 in the study was 1.4; 66 percent of the families used one arrangement. For a detailed presentation of arrangements used, see Appendix B.

A simple, mutually exclusive classification of the family's ability to arrange child care was created for the study. Of three categories, first were those families who relied exclusively on care at home by an adult. They made no arrangements for care outside the home, and they reported no reliance on the children

themselves. Second were those families who made arrangements for day care in neighborhood homes or centers, and who may also have relied partially on an adult at home, but did not have children looking after themselves. Third were all families whose children were cared for by an older brother or sister or were looking after themselves.

These three categories are important to distinguish for economic reasons because they reveal the extent to which family resources suffice to meet child care needs. Table 1 shows the extent to which each type of care was used for children under 12 years of age:

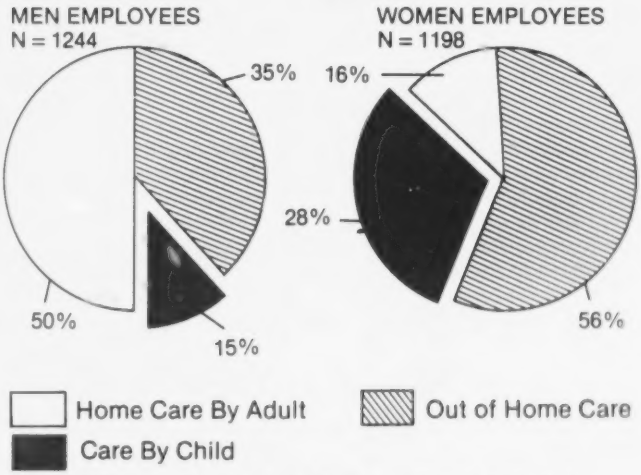
1) Exclusive use of child care at home by an adult.
For 50 percent of employed men and 16 percent of employed women this was the exclusive mode of child care, consisting mostly of care by the other parent, and to a lesser extent by another adult who lived in the same household or someone who came in to provide care. Among women employees having an adult at home for child care, 32 percent paid to have someone come in and 4 percent exchanged, traded, or bartered for it. Sixty five percent of the arrangements of women employees were for children under the age of six and 30 percent under the age of two.

2) Use of out-of-home care. This included family day care, centers, and relatives in a ratio of 4:2:1. All together, 35 percent of men and 56 percent of women employees used out-out-home care of some kind, to the exclusion of having children look after themselves. Most of the paid care fell in this category. Five percent of center care and 15 percent of care in someone else's home were obtained by exchange, trade, or barter. Seventy four percent of the arrangements were for children under the age of six and 28 percent under the age of two. Seventy percent of family day care and 57 percent of centers used were within two miles of home; 12 percent and 18 percent within a mile of work.

3) Care by child. Here, the children were watched by older brothers or sisters or looked after themselves. This type of arrangement was used by 15 percent of men employees and 28 percent of women employees. For approximately half of the families using this type of care, it supplemented some other arrangement. Care by child was used an average of 14 hours per week. The median number of hours per week was ten. Twenty-five percent of the arrangements of women employees were for children under the age of six and six percent were for children under the age of two.

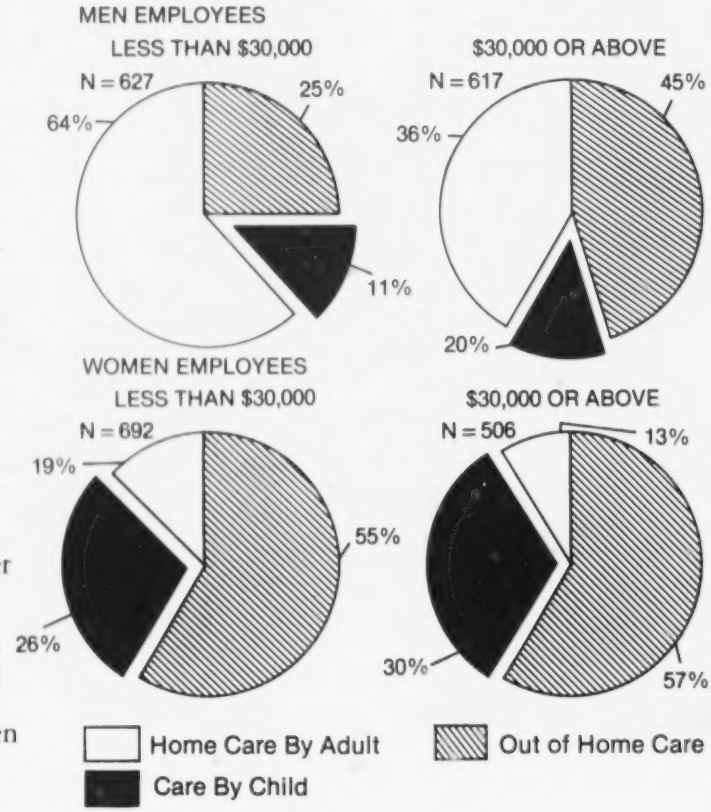
Is the choice of child care related to income? Income is a major family resource. What difference did family income make in the choice of child care? The answer is, "Not much". As shown in Table 2, women employees who had family incomes of $30,000 or above used care by a child slightly more frequently than those with family incomes under $30,000. Among men employees, higher family income was

Table 1
TYPE OF CHILD CARE USED FOR CHILDREN UNDER TWELVE, BY SEX OF EMPLOYEE



achieved by having an employed spouse; thus their child care shifted from an adult at home to either out-of-home care or care-by-child. Care-by-child doubled, approaching the pattern for women employees of whatever income. This finding did not conform to the perception of many employees who reported reliance on their children because they could not afford anything else. In general, however, care by child was found at all income levels.

Table 2
TYPE OF CHILD CARE USED FOR CHILDREN UNDER 12, BY LEVEL OF FAMILY INCOME AND SEX OF EMPLOYEE



More detailed analysis by small increments of family income and specific kinds of care showed little departure from the overall findings, although somewhat greater use of child care centers was associated with incomes of under $10,000 and over $50,000. Also no significant variation in use of family day care was found to be related to family income.

The survey did not ask employees about their individual salaries or personal income, but it was possible to analyze the data by occupation, which reflects personal income to some extent. However, women employees with higher paying occupations did not show less use of care-by-child. Thus, we found little tendency for increments in personal income or family income to find their way into purchase of out-of-home child care.

Dissatisfaction with care by child. A puzzling questions is **why** the higher income families did not use their additional financial resources to enter the day care market and purchase child care, rather than rely on their children, all of whom were under the age of 12. Some parents felt good about how responsibly their children handled themselves in this situation, but most of the parents of these children had mixed feelings, at best. They were much more likely to be dissatisfied with their child care arrangements than other parents—57 percent of employees relying on care by a child reported some degree of dissatisfaction with that type of care, compared to 23 percent of those using out-of-home care such as family day care and centers. (See Table 3).

Table 3

DISSATISFACTION WITH ARRANGEMENTS FOR CHILDREN UNDER TWELVE, BY TYPE OF CARE

Parent	Arrangement	0% 100%	%	Num.
men	care by adult at home		15%	554
men	care out of home		25%	400
men	care by child		30%	167
women	care by adult at home		34%	173
women	care out of home		23%	615
women	care by child		57%	306

In the words of parents:

- "I feel it's very unsafe to leave my children alone during the day, but. . . I feel it's more important to feed them. This is the final deciding factor."
- "I feel guilty about leaving my son home alone, but there's not much else I can do".
- "So much of my time and energy is occupied by worrying about my children. . . leaving children alone is heartbreaking. I **hate** it!!"
- "My daughter is 10 and able to care for herself. . ."
- "The hours that I work leaves my daughter sleeping alone at home. She has to get herself up for school and off to school without any assistance. I work from 12 a.m. to 9 a.m. Also I have a large dog for protection during those hours she is alone which keeps her feeling safe at home at night. We also have frequently discussed fire escape routes."
- "We have two sons—one's 10 years old and one's 8. . . they take care of themselves in the morning before they go to school. We would like them to go to a babysitter's house but they would rather sleep in the morning. So far they are doing very very good. . . they are never late to school and coming home. But I worry, school's almost over. . ."
- "Finding child care was a constant source of anxiety—I finally concluded that they were better off by themselves."

True, the higher income parents were less dissatisfied with care by child than parents with less money; 69 percent of mothers with family incomes of $30,000 or above versus 48 percent of those with less than $30,000. The fact remains that the percentage of families relying on this kind of arrangement remained the same for high and low income families despite their dissatisfaction.

Use of this type of arrangement averaged approximately ten hours per week, or two hours per day. The duration of care by child was

5 hours or less per week for 31 percent
10 hours or less per week for 62 percent
15 hours or less per week for 76 percent
20 hours or less per week for 83 percent

and 40 hours or more per week for 14 percent of these arrangements.

We do not wish to suggest that "care by child"—care by self or sibling—is necessarily or in all instances a cause for concern. For many children, it may be responsive to their wishes and may be a positive experience of self reliance, independence, and responsibility. For some children, it may indeed be the best of available alternatives. Nevertheless, for the majority of parents it appeared not to be an entirely satisfactory situation, and for many it was a major source of worry. Many were uncomfortable about it, by their own sense of values; for them, it was a survival solution. The problem does not stop with age 11. This report focused on children under 12, but the evidence suggests that in families with children 12 to 17 years of age, the kids were on their own far more often than parents felt comfortable with.

So we are back to the puzzling question. Despite misgivings, relying on the children was the path of least resistance, lowest cost, most convenience, or, possibly, greatest preference. Since allowing children to look after themselves was a worrisome alternative for so many, questions arise about whether more attractive alternatives were available to families. One alternative is for a parent not to be employed. Other alternatives are sought in the community's child care market. It is possible that many parents knew of no alternative child care resources that they considered better or even appropriate or that the children were willing to use.

Table 4

DIFFICULTY FINDING ARRANGEMENTS, BY TYPE OF CARE FOR CHILDREN UNDER TWELVE

Parent	Arrangement	0% 100%	%	Num.
men	care by adult at home		36%	471
men	care out of home		50%	433
men	care by child		40%	162
women	care by adult at home		61%	179
women	care out of home		57%	675
women	care by child		64%	316

Difficulty finding child care. There is some evidence for the possibility that these parents especially were frustrated by a lack of success in finding suitable resources. Employees were asked, "In your experience, how easy or difficult has it been to find child care arrangements?" The highest percentage difficulty was reported by those who were not currently participating in the day care market; 64 percent of those women employees using care by child reported difficulty finding child care (see Table 4). The questions remains as to whether an adequate and appealing child care market would have lured those employees from their low cost pattern of care.

Those women employees who had been successful in finding child care in the out-of-home market also perceived child care as difficult to find (Table 4). In fact, that was a general perception. Overall, 59 percent of women and 40 percent of men employees reported difficulty finding child care. The men found it easier, because for them it was. As we shall see below, the greater burden of finding child care fell on the women in the family. Controlling for sex of employee, the perception that child care is difficult to find prevailed among all employees regardless of age of children, the number of children, family income, the shift the employee worked, or the type of family (i.e., single parent or two working parents). The only exception was men employees with a spouse who waa not employed. Difficulty finding child care stood out as the most sharply experienced difficulty reported by employees in the survey.

Perceived difficulty in finding child care takes on added significance because it had important correlates (shown for women employees):

- Difficulty finding child care was moderately correlated with making arrangements with which employees were dissatisfied.
- Difficulty finding child care was strongly correlated with making arrangements that employees reported as difficult to maintain or continue with.
- Difficulty finding child care was associated with planning to change arrangements. Thirty eight percent said they were planning to change arrangements in the near future.
- Difficulty finding child care was moderately correlated with reported stress related to child care.

Consequences for the workplace.

Given that employees manage their family responsibilities in very different ways, a major question is: "What are the consequences for the workplace?" Conceivably, such consequences may take many forms. Family responsibilities may cause employees to miss entire work days, arrive at work late, leave work early, or take time during the workday. On a more subtle level, they may cause stress and worry which are sufficiently acute to affect productivity and morale. Such problems are not limited to employees who are parents; other employees have family responsibilities as well. Because of the importance of assessing how far-reaching the effects of family responsibilities on the work place may be, this survey examined these effects more closely.

Combining work and home. To establish some perspective, let us first examine the amount of difficulty that employees reported in balancing the demands of home and work. We asked all employees the following question: "Circumstances differ and some people find it easier than others to combine working with family responsibilities. How easy or difficult is it for you?" As seen in Table 5, most employees reported that they found it at least somewhat easy, including parents. However, most of the employees who did report difficulty combining home and work were parents—particularly women. Thirty eight percent of women employees with children under 12 reported at least some difficulty, compared to 9 percent of women with no children under 18. The pattern was the same for men employees, although the difference was not so great. Men and women with teenagers fell in-between.

Table 5

DIFFICULTY COMBINING HOME AND JOB, BY FAMILY RESPONSIBILITY

Employee	Family Type	0% 100%	%	Num.
men	with no children<18 yrs		8%	1884
men	with a child 12-18 yrs		14%	429
men	with a child<12 yrs		23%	1259
women	with no children<18 yrs		9%	2477
women	with a child 12-18 yrs		21%	453
women	with a child<12 yrs		38%	1224

Was it harder for single parents than for families with two earners? Yes, but not very much, because the burden fell more heavily on the women in all types of families. It was most difficult for women employees whose spouse was not employed; 45 percent of them reported difficulty. In general, employees who were raising children did report more difficulty combining work and family responsibilities—a difficulty that also was correlated with absenteeism—but most employed parents were doing well.

Absenteeism by type of child care. It was when we examined the workplace consequences of child care that some employed parents were found to experience more difficulty than others. The four types of absenteeism examined in this survey—days missed, times left early, times late, and time interrupted while at work—all represent time loss from work. Following concepts developed by the Bureau of Labor Statistics (Hedges, 1977), we used four methods of aggregating absenteeism rates: incidence, percent loss, severity, and average number of days or times per year. Together they provided participating employers with a useful profile of time loss in their workforce. For example, of all employees surveyed, 33 percent missed one or more days in the 4-week period (incidence). This 33 percent missed an average of 28 days per year (severity). The workforce as a whole lost an average of 9 days per year (annualized total loss), representing 4 percent of the total number of days that could have been worked (percent loss). In this pamphlet, we have confined ourselves primarily to the rate which most simply provides the most information—the average number of days missed (or times late, etc.) per year. The statistic averages all employees in the workforce, or any subgroup within it, and simply annualizes the four-

week mean, multiplying by 12, in order to produce a whole number of days per year.

The kind of child care resources that families used and the exercise of responsibility for child care accounted for significant and substantial differences in these absenteeism rates. By "child care resources", we refer to one of the three general types of arrangements: care by an adult at home, out-of-home care, or care-by-child, as shown above in Table 1. By "child care responsibility" we refer simply to the sex of the employee and role played in making the daily effort required to manage child care arrangements. The two are highly related, since women appeared to carry the major responsibility for child care arrangements, even in families in which both spouses were employed.

The specific findings were that men employees whose children remained at home with a spouse or other adult tended to experience absenteeism rates roughly comparable to those of employees who had no children at all, while women employees whose children were in out-of-home care, and especially those relying on care by a child, had the highest absenteeism rates. As shown in Table 6, this range was 65 percent higher in days missed (an estimated 5.1 days per year difference), 278 percent higher in times late (a difference of 13.6 times per year), 74 percent higher in leaving work early (a difference of 5.8 times per year), and 210 percent higher in interruptions (a difference of 53.1 times per year). Thus, for women employees the responsibility for managing out-of-home or care-by-child arrangements on a daily basis was associated with higher absenteeism than the traditional situation involving care at home by mothers. A noteworthy variation was that fathers missed as many days per year as mothers when the arrangement was care-by-child (13.4 days per year for fathers; 13.0 for mothers). Comparable patterns were also found when using incidence measures of absenteeism.

Table 6

ABSENTEEISM BY TYPE OF CHILD CARE

Days Missed (per year)

Parent	Arrangement	0 20	Avg. Num.
men	care by adult at home		7.9 614
men	care out of home		9.0 437
men	care by child		13.4 190
women	care by adult at home		9.3 189
women	care out of home		11.4 670
women	care by child		13.0 330

Times Late (per year)

Parent	Arrangement	0 20	Avg. Num.
men	care by adult at home		4.9 611
men	care out of home		6.9 437
men	care by child		8.3 188
women	care by adult at home		9.6 186
women	care out of home		15.8 665
women	care by child		18.5 329

Times Left Early (per year)

Parent	Arrangement	0 20	Avg. Num.
men	care by adult at home		7.8 610
men	care out of home		10.4 437
men	care by child		10.8 188
women	care by adult at home		8.9 189
women	care out of home		12.4 663
women	care by child		13.6 327

Times Interrupted (per year)

Parent	Arrangement	0 100	Avg. Num.
men	care by adult at home		25.3 606
men	care out of home		34.9 434
men	care by child		34.3 187
women	care by adult at home		29.8 183
women	care out of home		33.8 665
women	care by child		78.4 329

Comparison with employees having no parental responsibility. Because the study sought to investigate whether or not child care was a significant issue, an important comparison group were those employees with no children at all. The question here was whether employees who were parents experienced higher absenteeism than those who were not. The answer which is shown in Table 7, was "yes, in most instances." Comparing Tables 6 and 7 reveals the similarity of absenteeism between men who had no children under 18 and men who had a spouse or other adult at home for child care.

Table 7

ABSENTEEISM BY EMPLOYEE'S FAMILY RESPONSIBILITY

Days Missed (estimated per year)

Employee	Family Type	0 20	Avg. Num.
men	with no children<18 yrs		7.4 1901
men	with a child<12-18 yrs		6.7 430
men	with a child<12 yrs		9.4 1274
women	with no children<18 yrs		9.6 2541
women	with a child 12-18 yrs		12.2 459
women	with a child<12 yrs		11.7 1222

Times Late (estimated per year)

Employee	Family Type	0 20	Avg. Num.
men	with no children<18 yrs		6.7 1899
men	with a child 12-18 yrs		3.9 428
men	with a child<12 yrs		5.9 1268
women	with no children<18 yrs		9.2 2517
women	with a child 12-18 yrs		9.7 455
women	with a child<12 yrs		15.6 1214

Times Left Early (estimated per year)

Employee	Family Type	0 20	Avg. Num.
men	with no children<18 yrs		9.0 1888
men	with a child 12-18 yrs		7.6 426
men	with a child<12 yrs		9.1 1268
women	with no children<18 yrs		10.0 2507
women	with a child 12-18 yrs		10.0 450
women	with a child<12 yrs		12.4 1214

Times Interrupted (estimated per year)

Employee	Family Type	0 100	Avg. Num.
men	with no children<18 yrs		16.5 1894
men	with a child 12-18 yrs		21.1 428
men	with a child 12 yrs		29.6 1260
women	with no children<18 yrs		20.5 2512
women	with a child 12-18 yrs		47.6 455
women	with a child<12 yrs		45.3 1209

Interpretation of sex differences in absenteeism. Absenteeism for men was low because the women's was high. In the division of labor, absenteeism was revealed not to be a "women's problem" but a family solution. It reflected who was carrying the child care responsibilities which made it possible for the employee to be at work and, more than half of the time, for a spouse to be at work as well. This interpretation was supported independently by findings of sex differences in dealing with a sick child, difficulty in finding or continuing with child care arrangements, and in dissatisfaction with arrangements. Women consistently scored higher on these variables than men. Moreover, when men and women of two-income families had a sick child, women were more likely than men to stay home, take a day off without pay, or take emergency leave. Thus in families where both spouses earned incomes, women still appeared to carry a disportional share of the child care responsibilities. Employees who were single parents and were more likely to carry total responsibility for child care, not surprisingly, experienced among the highest absenteeism rates.

These findings are consistent with those of

previous studies. A body of research literature has confirmed that sex of the employee is highly correlated with absence from work but has been unable to solve the mystery of why that is. In looking for what it is about women that accounts for their higher rates, investigators have turned their attention without success to all manner of explanations, overlooking the obvious. Among the variables researched are differences in attendance norms, personality differences, health, and numerous job factors. One study, however, did conclude that "child care rather than personal illness appears to be the major variable which mediates sex differences in absence from work" (Englander-Golden and Barton, 1980). Sex differences in use of sick leave were found for parents, as in our survey, but not for non-parents, and the sick leave differences were attributed to child care.

Thus, the explanation was found in ordinary, everyday behavior. More than men, it is women's lot to arrange child care, to maintain the relationships involved, to expend the daily effort of "getting the show on the road," to deal with emergencies that arise, to be on call, and in myriad ways to be the manager of daily life. Despite changing sex roles and some increased sharing by two-career spouses, the Portland study has added confirmation in systematic detail to the importance of child care responsibilities as the most plausible explanation of sex differences in absenteeism.

Unlike alcoholism, which has low incidence in a workforce but a severe impact on the absenteeism of a small percentage of employees, child care as a source of absenteeism affects a relatively broad segment of the workforce and less often reaches the extreme individual frequencies of chronic conditions. Child care clearly is a major source of absenteeism.

Stress. In the last questions on our survey, we asked whether or not child care was creating any more difficulty, worry, or stress for people than other areas of life, such as personal health, health of other family members, family finances, job, and family relationships. Table 8 shows that child care took its place among life's major sources of stress even though it ranked low compared to job stress and family finances.

Table 8

STRESS RELATED TO CHILD CARE AND OTHER AREAS

Men w/Kids (n = 1165)	Employees reporting stress: 0% 100%	%
Childcare:		28%
Personal health:		27%
Family Members' Health:		35%
Family Finances:		50%
Job:		51%
Family Relationships:		36%

Women w/Kids (n = 1193)	Employees reporting stress: 0% 100%	%
Childcare:		47%
Personal Health:		42%
Family Members' Health:		37%
Family Finances:		62%
Job:		61%
Family Relationships:		47%

Focusing on three sources of stress—child care, personal health, and job— Table 9 shows that, like absenteeism, stress was substantially related to how families arranged and managed their child care. Exactly half of employed mothers who relied on their children under 12 for their own care reported stress related to child care. Among employees with out-of-home child care arrangements, 36 percent of the men and 46 percent of the women reported child care stress. Differences between women and men were less pronounced for job stress than for stress related to child care and personal health.

Table 9

STRESS BY TYPE OF CHILD CARE

Child Care Stress

Parent	Arrangement	0% 100%	%	Num.
men	care by adult at home		22%	548
men	care out of home		36%	436
men	care by child		30%	181
women	care by adult at home		42%	187
women	care out of home		46%	684
women	care by child		50%	322

Job Stress

Parent	Arrangement	0% 100%	%	Num.
men	care by adult at home		48%	549
men	care out of home		55%	437
men	care by child		48%	180
women	care by adult at home		52%	187
women	care out of home		62%	681
women	care by child		65%	323

Personal Health Stress

Parent	Arrangement	0% 100%	%	Num.
men	care by adult at home		24%	548
men	care out of home		28%	437
men	care by child		32%	181
women	care by adult at home		40%	187
women	care out of home		41%	682
women	care by child		44%	323

Among all parents of children under 12, 47 percent of women employees and 28 percent of men employees reported at least some stress related to child care "during the past four weeks." These proportions of the workforce reporting stress are all the more significant when it is recognized how brief a slice of life is represented by a 4-week period in which incidence of stress could occur. Many employees felt compelled to comment about child care stress they had experienced in the past when their children were younger. Possibly early crises were more acute, although reported incidence of stress related to child care was only slightly higher for the younger families.

It is important to note that family income was strongly correlated with stress from family finances but was not correlated with stress related to child care. Child care as a source of stress for employees was not significantly different at any category of family income.

Differences between full-time and part-time employees. It is instructive to examine the absenteeism rates and stress for men and women employees who worked full time compared to those who worked part time. For this analysis, the absenteeism rates were corrected for the amount of time on the job. Women parents employed part time had absenteeism rates approximately half that of full-time women workers with children under 12. For men employees who were parents of children under 12, the picture was mixed, with men employed part time having missed as many days and having been late about as frequently as full-time workers; but in leaving early or permitting interruptions, the part-time fathers, like the mothers had half the problems.

There was no difference in child care stress reported by fathers employed full time or part time, but mothers employed part time reported a slight increase in child care stress over mothers employed full time. Possibly there was more stress related to providing child care oneself than was related to being at work and to worrying about alternative arrangements. Job stress, however, was markedly less for women employed part time (49 percent versus 63 percent of full timers) but not for men (54 percent vs 49 percent—a slight reversal). Reported difficulty combining work and family responsibility was less for women, but not for men, who worked part time.

Effects of occuption. To analyze differences in absenteeism associated with occupation, we compared two broad categories:

1) professional and technical plus management and administrative
2) clerical, service, machine or transport operators, and other occupations.

We presumed that the management and professional occupations generally have more flexibility in their work schedules that permit them to deal with family emergencies. In fact, comparing categories of employees: men and women employees with and without children under 18, the management and professional employees reported slightly fewer days missed, slightly more times late among women with children, more times left early among men employees, and more times interrupted among men employees. Minor differences between occupational levels also emerged, controlling for family income among parents of children under 12. This is shown in Appendix C.

Since variables such as full time status and occupation could play an important role in the analysis and interpretation of findings, a re-analysis of the absenteeism and stress outcomes was conducted on a matched sample of 1387 men and women employees to equalize the effects of family income, occupation (management, administrative and professional, technical versus clerical, service, operatives, and others), full and part-time job status, type of family (single, employed spouse, and spouse not employed), and age of youngest child. Thus reducing the possible overpowering influence of these key variables, the resulting relationship between types of child care for men and women employees and absenteeism and stress showed very little difference from the analysis shown for the complete sample.

Company policy. A final set of findings concerns company policy. Wide variation was found among the 33 companies and agencies in policies such as use of sick leave and in all of the kinds of absenteeism. Across companies, a range of 10 percent to 74 percent of women employees reported that they were likely to use sick leave for a sick child. The percentage of employees in a company reporting that personnel practices made it difficult to deal with child care problems during working hours ranged from 11 percent to 67 percent. Low absenteeism rates frequently were associated with high levels of child care stress, but all other combinations also could be found.

- In a fast food chain, days missed were high, though unpaid, and lateness occurred at a low rate. Child care stress was low, because of the high proportion of part-time employees who were more likely to have child care at home compared to full-time workers.
- One public agency had low child care stress, high job stress, and high rates of absenteeism which were consistent with approved personnel practices, while another public agency had low absenteeism but employees who reported high job stress, high child care stress, and great difficulty with personnel practices.
- One corporation had low child care stress associated with high use of sick leave for a sick child.
- A company-wide policy of flexible hours, within a tightly run operation, was associated with low absenteeism and little concept of lateness.
- Many firms showed wide discrepancies in the flexibility and absenteeism allowed its management and technical staff compared to its other occupations.
- In some firms, patterns of policy and absenteeism were sharply different between the sexes, while in other organizations there was little difference in how the sexes fared.
- Hospitals used many part-time employees, while other firms used almost none, with correspondent differences in absenteeism rates among women employees with children.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Two major sets of findings emerged from the study:

Child care is hard to find. By examining how men and women employees differed in their child care arrangements, why they did what they did, and how much difficulty was associated with their choices, we concluded that child care is indeed hard to find in the Portland Community.

Child care is difficult to manage. By comparing absenteeism rates and stress reported by employees having differing child care resources, we concluded that how families manage child care does affect the ability of employees to be at work without carrying stress related to their child care arrangements.

In many ways, the families of employees are supposed to be invisible. In hiring, under affirmative action principles, questions about child care and family are to be avoided as potentially discriminatory and unfairly irrelevant to ability to do the job. Once on the job, the norms of the workplace say that how employees get to work is their business, as long as they do so on time and leave their families behind.

In reality, families are not so invisible. This survey is a study in the interdependence and reciprocal effects of family, child care, and workplace. The survey reveals rather dramatically that family structure and ability to arrange child care have an impact on the workplace in the form of absenteeism and stress. At the same time, company policies and work requirements have an impact on families and, in return, on the employee's stress or well being and ability to be at work.

Flexible policies that accommodate family responsibilities. The two major determinants of absenteeism rates were family difficulty in managing child care, on the one hand, and company flexibility and accommodation of it, on the other hand. This suggests that companies may profit by examining their personnel policies with an eye to the balance between job requirements and how employees must deal with the vicissitudes of family life. It probably is important to recognize that absenteeism is not necessarily a bad thing. Loss of time from the job cannot automatically be equated with loss of productivity—for two reasons. First, employees may compensate for time lost, and secondly, a modest amount of employer flexibility in accommodating time from the job, legitimizing the inevitable, may be associated with high morale and productivity. For these reasons, it possibly is not wise to push the importance of reducing absenteeism too hard at the expense of flexibility.

Companies need employees, and employees have families. Without families, society would be without a full and productive workforce. Yet in order to work, families must arrange child care. This they do as best they can with the resources they have. Most manage the feat well, but the task is difficult for a large minority of employees of both sexes. Few family responsibilities have greater daily consequences either for stress or well-being than do child care responsibilities—consequences which also reach the workplace in the form of loss of time and morale, both important elements of productivity.

Improving the child care market through better information. There is no common consensus about how child care needs should be addressed. Yet, there is one option that, while modest in cost, can significantly benefit all parties. That option is to create a system that supports employees and their families in their efforts to find and arrange the kind of child care they want their children to have.

The principal ingredient of such a system is information. Lack of information is a major barrier to the development of widely available, readily accessible, affordable child care. Employers need information about their employees; employees need information about resources; current and potential providers need information about child care demand; planning agencies need information about where to develop resources; and United Ways, community foundations, public funding agencies, and employers all need information in order to establish funding priorities. One important way to meet day care needs is simply to assist all interested parties with the information they need for the decisions they have to make. Resources unknown are resources unavailable. For employees who are child care consumers, difficulty finding child care is a a real problem—one which our survey found widespread and often stressful.

In most communities, child care information services are thinly provided, because they are poorly and uncertainly funded. United Way and local governments have felt compelled to pass over such services and planning functions in favor of help for individuals in greater distress. Because the well-being of employees is at stake, it is the business community and employers who have the most compelling interest in seeing that child care information services and resource development are provided.

Other options may also be feasible. Flexible benefit plans, for example, are worth considering because they help to preserve equity among employees in benefits received, yet allow freedom of consumer choice of child care. A top priority, however, is to improve the way the child care market responds to families as they try to meet their child care responsibilities.

Companies and all organizations are faced with sharp divergence of opinion within the workforce. Many employees described acute child care needs, and they expressed very definite ideas about the kind of child care they wanted, wished they could find, wished they could afford, wished their employers would provide or wished the community would develop. They perceived child care as expensive and as something employers should help provide or pay for. At the same time, there were employees who perceived any demand for child care subsidies as unfair. They related the inequity of such subsidies to their own financial sacrifices which they made in purchasing child care or in foregoing a second income in order to care for their children at home. They even saw the circumstance of single parents as a choice and personal responsibility. Few issues facing society involve such diverging views of fairness and equity concerning career opportunity and work, incentives and hardship, child rearing and family responsibility.

We have not made recommendations about all of the specific options employers might consider. Each organization should think through its options based on the employee needs of its own workforce.

We have particularly avoided recommending expensive benefits or paticular facilities, such as on-site day care centers for several reasons:

1. One is a belief, as described above, that a higher priority is to improve a system of child care resources and provide access to them by expanding information services for employees.
2. It is not clear how feasible, sensible, or cost effective it is to concentrate resources on development of facilities such as on-site centers despite the popular belief in that solution. No single kind of child care resource can be expected to serve a large proportion of a workforce. Subsidizing one type of care creates inequity and controls consumer choices. In the long run, a freely operating child care market probably will be more responsive to family needs.
3. Companies should not anticipate that facilities can markedly reduce child care-related absenteeism. The evidence of this study suggests that all kinds of out-of-home child care arrangements extract a price in absenteeism for whomever in the family has the daily responsibility for managing the arrangements.

Probably the most cost effective initiatives for Portland employers at this time are:

1. To assess the family circumstances and needs of their own workforce;
2. To weigh the effects of personnel policies on employees such as extending the use of sick leave to family members or other policies that allow some accommodation of child care contingencies;
3. To convey an understanding of the feats of management required of employees in meeting their child care and other family responsibilities, and tolerate some flexibility to the extent compatible with job requirements and productivity;
4. To assist employees with the very difficult process of finding child care by participating in a community effort to develop the information and resources needed by families for children of all ages.

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APPENDIX A

EMPLOYEE CHARACTERISTICS

	Men w/o Kids n = 1937	Women w/o Kids n = 2589	Men w Kids n = 1794	Women w Kids n = 1801	All Employees n = 8121
mean age—	40.28	37.01	37.55	34.01	37.25
% non-white	8%	6%	8%	12%	8%
% income $15000	10%	21%	4%	17%	14%
% income $15-30000	40%	42%	41%	40%	41%
% income $30000	50%	38%	55%	43%	46%
% single	44%	54%	14%	37%	39%
% spouse employed	40%	39%	52%	57%	46%
% spouse not employed	17%	7%	34%	6%	15%
% mgt/pro	58%	48%	58%	46%	52%
% full-time	93%	88%	96%	80%	89%
% flexible hours	37%	37%	36%	39%	37%
% day shift	75%	82%	73%	81%	78%
mean travel time	21.81	22.09	24.25	24.02	22.93

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APPENDIX B

Child Care Arrangements for Children Under 12 Used by Men and Women Employees

Type of Arrangement	Number and Percent of Families Using Each Type of Arrangement			
	Men		Women	
Care at Home	n	%	n	%
Spouse or other live-in adult who is member of household	846	68%	362	30%
Child: older brother or sister or child looks after self	191	15%	333	28%
Relative who comes in	37	3%	44	4%
Non-relative who comes in	72	6%	72	6%
Out-of-Home Care				
Relative's home	74	6%	135	11%
Home of non-relative (Family Day Care)	301	24%	494	41%
Child care center (day care, nursery school, before and after-school center)	171	14%	255	21%
# Arrangements:	1692		1695	
# Families:	1248		1209	
Ratio Arrangements per Family:	1.4		1.4	

APPENDIX C

OUTCOMES FOR EMPLOYEES WITH KIDS UNDER 12

By Occupation, Family Income, and Sex of Employee

Days Missed (estimated per year)

Employee	Family Income	0 25	Avg.	Num.
non-mgt/pro men	<30,000		10.5	344
mgt/pro men	<30,000		9.3	303
non-mgt/pro men	30,000 +		9.5	187
mgt/pro men	30,000 +		8.4	459
non-mgt/pro women	<30,000		13.0	449
mgt/pro women	<30,000		11.5	266
non-mgt/pro women	30,000 +		12.6	206
mgt/pro women	30,000 +		9.7	316

Times Late (estimated per year)

Employee	Family Income	0 25	Avg.	Num.
non-mgt/pro men	<30,000		4.0	343
mgt/pro men	<30,000		7.2	302
non-mgt/pro men	30,000 +		2.8	188
mgt/pro men	30,000 +		7.5	454
non-mgt/pro women	<30,000		13.1	443
mgt/pro women	<30,000		24.0	264
non-mgt/pro women	30,000 +		10.6	207
mgt/pro women	30,000 +		14.6	312

Times Left Early (estimated per year)

Employee	Family Income	0 25	Avg.	Num.
non-mgt/pro men	<30,000		5.9	341
mgt/pro men	<30,000		8.3	301
non-mgt/pro men	30,000 +		7.3	188
mgt/pro men	30,000 +		12.8	457
non-mgt/pro women	<30,000		12.3	444
mgt/pro women	<30,000		14.9	255
non-mgt/pro women	30,000 +		11.0	208
mgt/pro women	30,000 +		11.7	311

Time Interrupted (estimated per year)

Employee	Family Income	0 100	Avg.	Num.
non-mgt/pro men	<30,000		13.3	341
mgt/pro men	<30,000		39.4	297
non-mgt/pro men	30,000 +		14.6	187
mgt/pro men	30,000 +		39.7	454
non-mgt/pro women	<30,000		35.4	442
mgt/pro women	<30,000		48.0	263
non-mgt/pro women	30,000 +		52.9	206
mgt/pro women	30,000 +		46.5	314

Child Care Stress

Employee	Family Income	0% 100%	%	Num.
non-mgt/pro men	<30,000		25%	306
mgt/pro men	<30,000		28%	268
non-mgt/pro men	30,000 +		30%	165
mgt/pro men	30,000 +		30%	431
non-mgt/pro women	<30,000		48%	417
mgt/pro women	<30,000		52%	261
non-mgt/pro women	30,000 +		44%	194
mgt/pro women	30,000 +		44%	315

Personal Health Stress

Employee	Family Income	0% 100%	%	Num.
non-mgt/pro men	<30,000		28%	306
mgt/pro men	<30,000		26%	270
non-mgt/pro men	30,000 +		30%	165
mgt/pro men	30,000 +		25%	431
non-mgt/pro women	<30,000		46%	416
mgt/pro women	<30,000		45%	260
non-mgt/pro women	30,000 +		40%	194
mgt/pro women	30,000 +		36%	316

Family Health Stress

Employee	Family Income	0% 100%	%	Num.
non-mgt/pro men	<30,000		34%	306
mgt/pro men	<30,000		34%	270
non-mgt/pro men	30,000 +		36%	165
mgt/pro men	30,000 +		34%	430
non-mgt/pro women	<30,000		37%	411
mgt/pro women	<30,000		43%	261
non-mgt/pro women	30,000 +		30%	194
mgt/pro women	30,000 +		38%	314

Financial Stress

Employee	Family Income	0% 100%	%	Num.
non-mgt/pro men	<30,000		54%	307
mgt/pro men	<30,000		61%	271
non-mgt/pro men	30,000 +		51%	165
mgt/pro men	30,000 +		39%	430
non-mgt/pro women	<30,000		73%	417
mgt/pro women	<30,000		69%	260
non-mgt/pro women	30,000 +		48%	195
mgt/pro women	30,000 +		50%	315

Job Stress

Employee	Family Income	0% 100%	%	Num.
non-mgt/pro men	<30,000		47%	306
mgt/pro men	<30,000		52%	271
non-mgt/pro men	30,000 +		52%	165
mgt/pro men	30,000 +		51%	429
non-mgt/pro women	<30,000		56%	414
mgt/pro women	<30,000		62%	260
non-mgt/pro women	30,000 +		62%	195
mgt/pro women	30,000 +		67%	316

Family Relationship Stress

Employee	Family Income	0% 100%	%	Num.
non-mgt/pro men	<30,000		36%	306
mgt/pro men	<30,000		36%	269
non-mgt/pro men	30,000 +		36%	165
mgt/pro men	30,000 +		35%	429
non-mgt/pro women	<30,000		50%	415
mgt/pro women	<30,000		53%	261
non-mgt/pro women	30,000 +		41%	195
mgt/pro women	30,000 +		40%	315

Difficulty Combining Home and Job

Employee	Family Income	0% 100%	%	Num.
non-mgt/pro men	<30,000		24%	340
mgt/pro men	<30,000		19%	299
non-mgt/pro men	30,000 +		25%	188
mgt/pro men	30,000 +		22%	455
non-mgt/pro women	<30,000		36%	447
mgt/pro women	<30,000		41%	265
non-mgt/pro women	30,000 +		37%	211
mgt/pro women	30,000 +		35%	316

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